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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6520  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4300  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2910  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7475  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1524  
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Syria/PLO, Syria/Iran, Syria/Libya, Syria/Belgium, Iraq,  
Lebanon (1/22)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Jan. 22 reported President Asad's and  
VP Shara's meetings with Ali Larijani, Secretary of the Iranian  
Supreme National Security Council, on Jan 21. Talks focused on  
current regional developments. Larijani conveyed a message from  
President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad about the situation in the region and  
issues of common concern.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' visit continued to be a major  
topic in the Syrian press. Papers reported Abbas' meeting with Vice  
President Shara on Jan. 21, which tackled ways to overcome the  
current tension in the Palestinian territories, and efforts to form  
a national unity government, strengthen Palestinian national unity,  
fulfill the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, and  
end the unjust siege on them. Al-Shar'a stressed Syria's readiness  
to offer anything that would consolidate Palestinian unity and help  
realize this objective. Papers also reported President Abbas' talks  
with Khaled Meshaal, Chairman of the HAMAS Politburo, on Jan. 21 on  
formation of a Palestinian national unity government.

On Syrian-Libyan relations, papers reported that President Asad  
received a message from Colonel Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi on the situation  
in the region and North Africa and relations between Syria and  
Libya. The message was delivered by Ahmad Qadhaf-al-Dam, Colonel  
Al-Qadhafi's envoy, when President Asad received him on Jan. 21.

Papers also reported the visit to Damascus on Jan. 21 by Anne-Marie  
Lizin, President of the Belgian Senate, and her meeting with  
Parliament Speaker Mahmoud al-Abrash. Headlines featured a press  
statement by Lizin upon her arrival in Damascus, in which she  
reiterated the importance of Syria's role at this critical stage,  
saying "there would be no good future for the region's peoples  
without Syria." Lizin called for continuing European communication  
with Syria; the best way for that, according to Lizin, "is to come  
to Syria and hold talks with her officials." "The visit aims at  
hearing Syrian officials and conveying the Syrian position to  
European states," she said, stressing that "the Belgian Senate can  
influence the European Parliament to build positive relations with  
Syria."

End of summary.

## 12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad receives two letters, from Libyan Leader al-Qadhafi and Iranian President Ahmedinejad, on latest developments in the region. Larijani: circumstances require continuing consultations among friends" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/22)

"Vice-President Shara and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas discuss steps for forming a Palestinian national unity government" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/22)

"Palestinian President Abbas and Chairman of HAMAS Politburo Khaled Meshaal agree on banning civil strife, completing dialogue and re-building the Palestinian Liberation Organization" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/22)

"Iraq President Talabani: President Asad seeks a stable and secure Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/22)

"President of Belgian Senate Anne-Marie Lizin: No good future for peoples of the region without Syria" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/22)

"A general strike in Beirut tomorrow. Opposition leaders: A necessary option to save Lebanon" (Government-owned Tishreen, 1/22)

"A Russian move in the region: Reviving the peace process and correcting work of the international investigation committee" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 1/22)

## 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Do not Lose Direction"

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Abd-al-Fattah al-Awad, Chief Editor of government-owned Al-Thawra, said (1/22): "Syria does not favor one Palestinian faction over another and does not interfere in details of the relationships among the factions, because it is convinced that every intra-Palestinian dispute serves Israel.... Every effort to prevent, ward off, and close doors of Palestinian differences prevents Israel from exploiting these differences for its own interest....

"Israel has repeatedly failed in its effort to create intra-Palestinian strife. But some mistakes here and there gave the impression that Israel was about to realize part of its desired objective. Reliance on Palestinian awareness of this fact, however, yielded good results. Sincere people were eager to preserve Palestinian blood too sacred to be shed in a domestic strife....

"The establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and the return of the refugees are the objectives on which all Palestinians agree, although there might be different views on how to achieve these objectives....

"While receiving Mahmud Abbas, Syria strongly believes that what Palestinians agree upon is what everyone supports. Syria trusts Palestinians' wisdom, awareness, and realization of what is being plotted against them secretly and publicly. Syria's message has something of advice and something of hope: Palestinians, do not lose direction."

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"Dialogue is A Palestinian Option"

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Ibrahim Shugayr, a commentator in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (1/22): "The continued deterioration in the domestic Palestinian situation, obstructing national dialogue, and deepening the Palestinian rift, represents gratuitous services to Israel, which is exploiting the existing Palestinian situation to buy time, continue its known practices, entrench occupation, and tighten the noose

around the Palestinian people....

"US Secretary of State Condaleeza Rice visited the Palestinian territories to serve Israel's interest of accelerating and stoking domestic strife among Palestinians and foiling efforts to achieve national accord and dialogue.

"Therefore, we must warn against relying on foreign guarantees and activating the peace process based on American criteria and Israeli conditions."

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"The Strangest Logic in History"  
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Ali Nasrallah, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (1/22): "The US Administration in previous years was reluctant to listen to the voices warning it that fabricating crises and wars is an inappropriate escalatory step that jeopardizes international peace....

"The US Administration was very stubborn with regard to the Iraq war, despite all domestic and foreign opposition to its foreign policy.... The White House's criticism of Congress' attempt to pass resolutions to protect the United States from the evils of Bush's miserable adventures comes within this context....

"If Congress has ever taken a step in the right direction in its history, it is its demand that the President obtain approval for increasing the number of troops in Iraq and for attacking Iran. Such a step can in no way be seen as an effort to tie his hands, because it has its reasons and justifications....

"When Democratic and Republican Congressional leaders who are leading this effort say 'we will not let the current administration make the same mistake twice,' this is a strong indication that they are convinced that Iran does not pose a threat, and that Iraq was never a threat."

Corbin